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McSHANE, JOHN FRANCIS.
THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE

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The Hand of Providence

A tribute to the Civil War nurses of the Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind., whose five years of patriotic service in the foundation of Indianapolis General Hospital has almost been forgotten.

Rev John P. McShane.

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Illustrated

The Briggittine Press
801 N. West St.
Indianapolis 2, Ind.



The City Hospital, 1861, when the Sisters of Providence took charge.

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FOREWORD

The terrible war between the States is now only a memory; and history records the valiant deeds and sacrifices of all who participated. Taps have sounded on the last encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic; and soon the inevitable hour will come when taps will sound for the last remaining veteran. But taps will never sound on the work of the good Sisters of Providence, who during the Civil War founded the City Hospital, and, under the most trying conditions, operated it for a period of almost six years, for the care of the sick and the wounded.

Rev. Father McShane, pastor of St. Bridget's parish, who has worked with the Indianapolis General Hospital, in the traditional manner of the Sisters, for nearly a half-century, has become a definite part of this institution.

He has painstakingly and factually uncovered and brought to light, the good work of the Sisters, who founded at Indianapolis a hospital destined to develop into the present Indianapolis General Hospital, which today is a monument in masonry and steel; an organization of highly trained people; a social Institution, expending large sums of the community's money in community service. But the spirit of the founding Sisters still lingers on to give aid and comfort to all who seek refuge here.

We trust that the Guiding Star of the good Sisters of Providence will brighten with each passing year, and that it will continue to shine on our Hospital as a symbol of HOPE, FAITH, and CHARITY!

Chas. W. Myers, M. D., Superintendent, Indianapolis General Hospital.

The Hand Of Providence

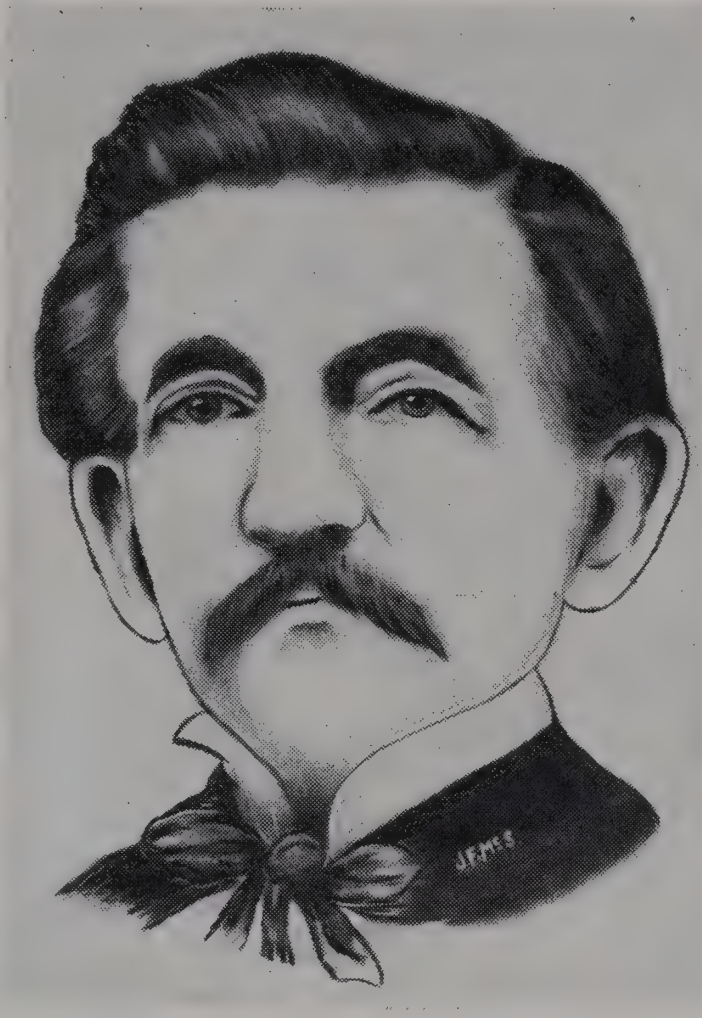
“Rome,” the historian informs us, “was not built in a day.” Neither was the Indianapolis City Hospital, or General Hospital, as it is known today, thus built; but over some of the most momentous and critical periods or epochs in the history of the city, state and nation — from the years 1854 to 1949. From an unfit structure, in an unhealthy, malarial swamp, off Indiana Avenue and Locke St., the General Hospital has arisen to one of the finest, best equipped, and most practical hospitals in the U.S.

The history of the General Hospital, according to historians, may be divided into three great periods or epochs; but this story concerns only the first — the birth, time, and place; and the terrible period of the Civil War, 1861-1865, when at the request of Governor Morton, the Sisters of Providence, from St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Vigo Co., Indiana, took charge of the City Hospital, and bent every patriotic effort to raise the Hospital to the highest standard, and to alleviate and soften the many miseries and heart-aches of both Union and Confederate soldiers, as only they could. With this stupendous effort went the combined forces of the Federal, State and City governments.

In 1854 the frightful small-pox epidemic, which swept Indianapolis with a heavy death-toll, made evident the need of a hospital. Dr. Livingston Dunlap, a city councilman, and a distinguished and able physician, took the lead in erecting a hospital to cost \$25,000.00. In their heroic efforts in this matter Dr. Dunlap and his co-workers met almost insurmountable difficulties from many angles. After four years in construction it was completed as planned — but at a cost of \$300,000.00 — only to be abandoned for want of equipment and patients. Thus it stood for some time, and was dubbed “Dunlap’s Folly.” But, in the Providence of God, this same building, at the outbreak of the Civil War, was destined to prove the greatest possible blessing for the Federal, State, and City governments.

Concerning this period we read in the “Indiana Medical Journal: “Back in 1854 when the population of Indianapolis was less than 20,000, Drs. John S. Boobs and

J. L. Dunlap led a group of citizens in memorializing the City Council to erect a hospital. Since it was thought that a centrally located hospital would depreciate the value of the adjoining property, the site purchased was among



Dr. Livingston Dunlap. "Dunlap's Folly" proved the greatest blessing.

the malaria swamps and stumps of the Fall Creek region. There was much opposition to the project, and it was almost abandoned. For a time it was called, "Dunlap's Folly," and other terms of ridicule, and efforts were made to sell the land for a mill site. The United States Government solved the problem at the beginning of the Civil War, when the northern soldiers were concentrated there, and the Administration Building was taken over by the Army.

In an address at the General Hospital, Jan. 23, 1931, Dr. W. N. Wishard, dean of the medical fraternities, and one of the most popular doctors ever connected with the hospital, said: "Dunlap's Folly" finally became a God-send to the people. Thousands of Union soldiers and Confederate prisoners were treated there. Members of the Catholic organizations, and the Sisters of Providence, from St. Mary-of-the-Woods, took service there as nurses, and every doctor and nurse not away to the war worked on its wards."

In his "Greater Indianapolis," Jacob Piatt Dunn writes: "On May 18, 1861, the City turned its hospital building over to the United States Government, which used it as a military hospital until July 1, 1865, and then, four months longer, as a soldier's home, surrendering it to the city in November, 1865.

Data On The Sisters Meagre

The Annals of the Indianapolis General Hospital, for the period from May, 1861 to July, 1865, when the Sisters of Providence took charge are vague and uncertain concerning the Sisters. Only newspaper clippings, editorial comments of the "Indianapolis Daily Journal," the "Indianapolis Sentinel," and sketches by such notables as



First Log Cabin, St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

Colonel Oran Perry, of the 69th. Regiment of Indiana, who unto his death in 1929, was guardian of the Soldiers' and Sailor's Monument, Ed P. Ferris, Drs. Kitchen and Jameson, Jacob Piatt Dunn, B. R. Sulgrove, and a few State and Federal Government reports, are available.

St. Mary-of-the-Woods Rises Out of The Forest

About this same time, in the primeval forests of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Vigo County, Indiana, five miles from Terre Haute and the Wabash River, five pioneer Sisters of Providence, with their Reverend Mother, Theodore Guerin, were building too — yes, a home, and an institution which ranks today as one of the finest in the United States. They, too, labored under the greatest difficulties — difficulties which only the pioneers know. Endowed by God with health, physical strength, and special blessings, they met each and every difficulty in its turn, and conquered through patience, toil, sweat and prayer. They were real heroines, and patriots too.

Christened by their founder, the Rev. Jacques Du-jarie, in 1806, in Ruille-sur-Loir, France, the "Sisters of Providence," they, certainly, proved themselves "Providential" in the great crisis in Indiana and the nation in 1861. The aim and objective of their foundation, after the terrible upheaval of the French Revolution, was the care of the sick, the maimed, the dying and the orphaned of the Revolution. The forefathers of the original band had gone through the terrible ordeal, and had tasted its horrors. Many had been divested of all earthly possessions, and had learned the lessons and impediments of poverty. Some of these forefathers were even of the nobility, and were obliged to seek refuge outside of France. The family of the first Mother-General of the society was of this class, and was forced into exile. She was Mlle. Josephine Zoe du Roscoat, daughter of Count Casimir du Roscoat, one of the nobility of France, and one of the noted exiles of the French Revolution.

Educated, cultured, ambitious, self-sacrificing and God-like these heroines contributed more than their share to the upbuilding of a better France, and in pioneering in God's Name in other foreign fields — notably in America.

Among the earliest volunteers of themselves to the service of God and of humanity in France was Mother Theodore Guerin, foundress of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Vigo Co., Indiana. As a girl she had learned of the virgin fields and of prospects in America, and of the incomparable work she could do for God there, and planned accordingly. With five associates she left her native land, and, on October 22, 1840, arrived at what is now known as St. Mary-of-the-Woods, five miles from Terre Haute.

St. Mary's was then a forest primeval, untouched and unharmed by the despoiling hand of man. With hearts as strong and as rugged as the towering sycamores and oaks around about them, this little band started building their home and an institution for the betterment of humanity. The Hands of Providence guided and sustained them in their every move towards success.

This foundation was chiefly for educational purposes, although their Rule included all works of mercy, and, in emergencies, the nursing of the sick and the dying, even in their homes. Many and thrilling are the stories told of



Nurses—
Sister St. Felix Buchanan.

these noble souls in ministering to the sick and the dying, in the heats of summer, and the ice and snows of winter, when doctors and nurses were unavailable. But educational work was their main objective. St. Mary's Academy opened its doors in 1841, to become one of the finest academies in the country. To it was added a pharmacy to provide medicine and care for the sick and the needy. As early as 1850 Terre Haute had its parochial school, with the higher grades, taught by these Sisters. Other schools throughout the diocese were in the planning. The Hand of Providence extended like a rain-bow of benediction over St. Mary's, cloistered like a garden-spot from heaven. Blessed peace and harmony reigned over it until the year 1860, when the terrible rumblings of the approaching Civil War shook the country as an earthquake — and St. Mary's as well. The rumbling burst into thunders, the cannon roared its defiance, the fires of battle kindled the teeming fields — the terrible Civil War was on.

Throughout the State of Indiana the question of slavery was seriously debated; sentiment concerning it was divided. Although slavery was forbidden by the constitution of Indiana, there were at this time within its borders, especially in some of its southern counties, and a few in the northern, slave owners and a number of slaves. This situation for a time threatened dire disaster. The slave owners, their friends and associates, were obstinate, and even conspired to join the Southern Confederacy.

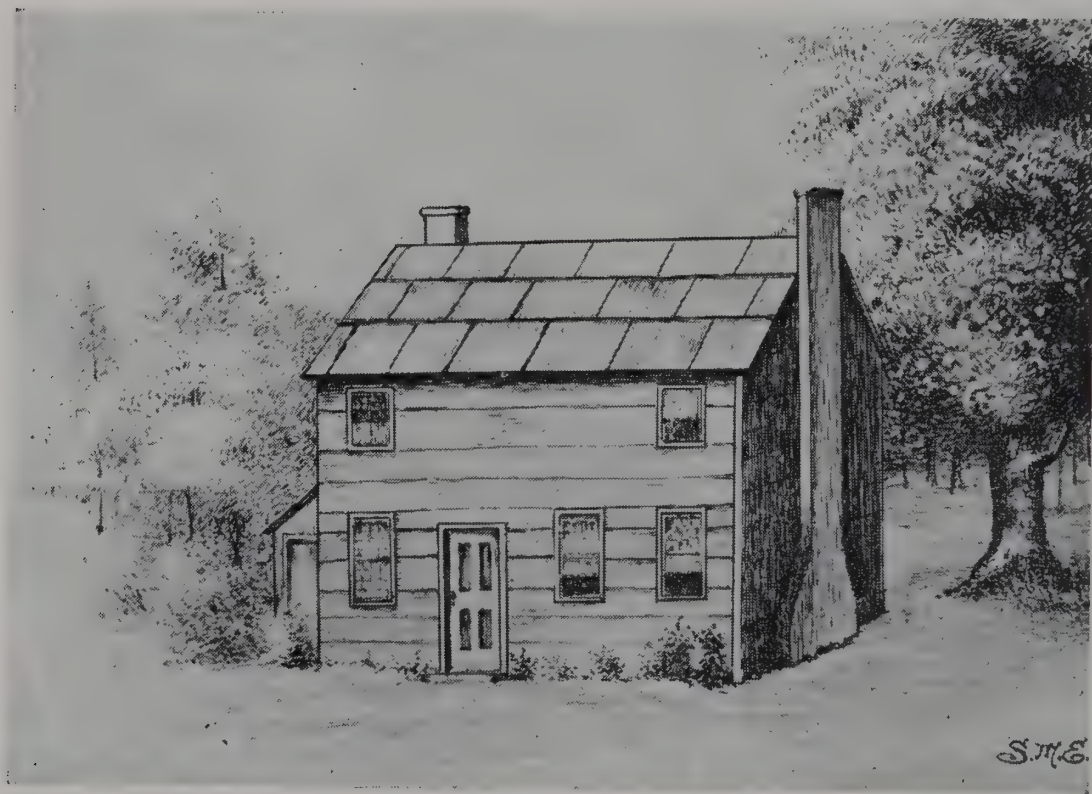
In the national and state elections of 1860 the Republican Party was victorious; but in the later state and congressional elections the Democrats held a majority in the State Legislature. This majority of the Democrats was strong enough early in 1861 to kill bills introduced in the Legislature empowering Governor Morton, a Republican, to re-organize the state militia, in anticipation of a call from the Federal Government.

Added to these difficulties a majority of the State Legislature, which was Democratic, for a time, refused to co-operate with Governor Morton, who was a Republican, in the prosecution of the war. A move was even started for Indiana to join the Confederacy of the South. But, due largely to the dynamic personality, and adamantine

stand of Governor Morton, who ranks in history as one of the great Civil War Governors, the many difficulties were adjusted, and Indiana responded, at the beginning of the war, with almost double her allotted quota of soldiers for the battlefields, besides meeting the other demands made on her for the success of the war. Added to this, came many volunteers, until the total number of soldiers reached two hundred and twenty thousand.

Besides being a great war Governor, a statesman, alert to the many conspiracies of the times, Governor Morton was most thoughtful and sympathetic for the wounded soldiers. As they were brought in from the many battlefields he could be seen day and night trying, with tearful eye to give them every possible assistance. Many are the complimentary stories told by the good Sisters in the hospital, of his imposing personality, sympathetic eye, magic touch, and the healing balm of his consoling words, for

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First Convent, St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

the maimed and dying soldiers. Many, too, are the stories told by the same Sisters of his kindness, and appreciation for them in their arduous tasks, and of his help to them in every way. We have it on the word of one of the Sisters, that in emergencies, and when things ran low, the Governor provided for them from his own table and household.

Of Governor Morton's many difficulties during the first years of the war we read, in the "History of Indianapolis and Marion County," by B. R. Sulgrove, page 317: "The Legislature of 1863 was adverse to the war, and the party sustaining the war. It refused to receive Governor Morton's message. It tried to deprive him of the constitutional command of the State Militia. It proposed no less than thirty measures of truce or peace with the Confederate States. It failed to make any appropriations to carry on the civil government, or the military contributions to the general government.

This forced Morton to raise money by loans of popular contributions, both for these purposes, and for interest on the State debt to avoid the ruinous imputation of repudiation, which was so disastrous from 1841 to 1846. He constituted a "Financial Bureau" to meet the emergency, and for two years governed without any connection with the other State offices, which were in the hands of political antagonists and friends of the Confederacy. The Legislature of 1865, however, was of a different complexion, and legalized all of the Governor's acts, paid his debts, and reimbursed his loans and contributions.

Governor Morton's Difficulties

The early heavy toll of the battle-fields and the military camps was heartrendering. The need of hospitals, doctors and nurses was crying. In desperation Governor

Morton appealed to the Sisters of Providence, through Monsignor Augustine Bessonies, pastor of St. John's

Governor O. P. Morton



He Wanted Sisters

we are now undertaking!" Two days later, on May 17, 1861, the Sisters of Providence took charge of the City Hospital, only to relinquish it in July, 1865.

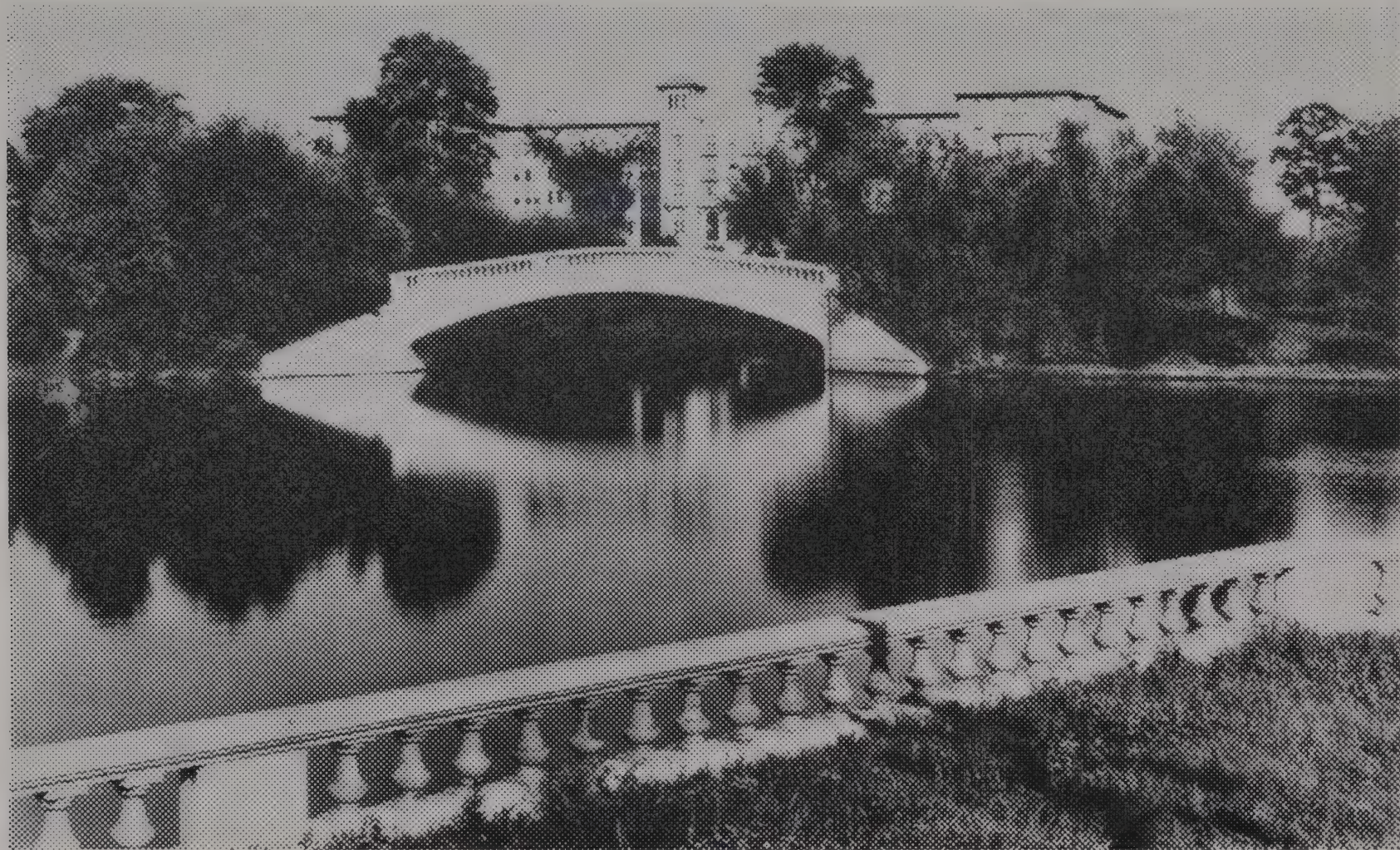
Throughout the entire stay of the Sisters in Indianapolis, Monsignor Bessonies proved himself not only a pastor and confidant, but a real father as well. Their ambitions, aspirations, hopes and zeal for the Kingdom of Christ on earth, and the preservation of their adopted country — even their own native language — were the same. They, indeed, understood each other, and worried, hoped, prayed, and toiled accordingly.

Monsignor Bessonies, pastor of the great war-center in Indiana, was untiring in his efforts for the success of the Union cause. He rallied the entire catholic and pro-

Church, Indianapolis, Ind. To this appeal the Reverend Mother M. Cecelia, then Superior-General of the Order of Providence, at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind., immediately replied with the dedication of the entire personnel and resources of the Sisters of Providence to the cause of the Union.

The Sisters of Providence Called

After hours of prayer with her little band, in their humble chapel, for Divine guidance, and heroic strength, the Rev. Mother penned these memorable and stirring words in the *Community Records*: "This is an eventful and supreme occasion for our Community! May our Divine Lord help us to perform well the duties



—St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Vigo County, Indiana.

testant public for the winning of the war, and assumed the office of Chaplain of the soldiers and prisoners around Indianapolis, although he did not actually enlist in the army or navy. The official Federal, State and diocesan records do not contain the names of any of the diocesan priests as officially enlisting in the army or navy. Many, however, such as Father Du Pontavice, Father Audran and others, worked heroically to sustain the Union. The correspondence in writing between Father Du Pontavice and Bishop Hailandiere, Father Audran and Bishop Hailandiere, Father Bessonies and Bishop Purcell, are invaluable contributions to the history of these stirring times, and reflect the political issues and disturbances that dangerously threatened the cause of peace.

Father Bessonies celebrated Mass regularly in Camp Morton for the prisoners brought there from the south, and administered the Last Sacraments to the sick and the dying until permission to do so was refused him. Undaunted by this refusal, through a mutual friend in Washington, D.C., he appealed to Edward Stanton, Secretary of War, for admission to the Camp, but was again refused. In desperation he appealed to Governor Morton and Colonel Conrad Baker, from whom he finally received permission to attend the dying — but only under guard. With much satisfaction he used to tell how grateful he was in being allowed to minister to four “Northern Bounty Jumpers,” who were sentenced to be shot.

Sisters Visit Camp Morton

Periodically, the Sisters of Providence were allowed to visit Camp Morton, and to extend to the inmates the same loving care as they extended to all others.

In connection with the good work of the Sisters at Camp Morton, Sister Mary Theodosia, in her interesting book: “Lest We Forget,” writes of Sister Athanasius: “It is said there were seven thousand Confederate prisoners at Indianapolis at one time. Some of them fell sick. Sister Athanasius went to them also and administered to their needs with unquestioning devotedness. On one occasion the following dialogue took place:

“Sister, do you know that we are rebels? See the gray?”

Sister smiled, "You are a wounded soldier, and a Christian, I hope."

"What is a Christian, Sister?"

"One who believes in Christ, the Son of God. You believe in Him, do you not?"

"Why - - er - -, do you Sister?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, then, if you do, I do too." He was growing faint. Sister smiled: "Have you ever been baptized?"

He did not know, but he wished to be a Christian, and averred that he would be a "mighty good one" when he "got out." Sister lost no time in giving him baptism, as his life was ebbing fast. He then fixed his eyes upon her with a bright smile and said: "Good-bye, good friend. I must obey orders. I guess it — is — this way — out!"

Upon the arrival of the Sisters at the hospital we find the following record in their *Community Diary*: They found the new hospital in a miserable state of filth and disorder, and the sick in a wretched condition. The Sisters labored very hard to put the hospital in a proper condition; their exertions were crowned with the greatest success. The change they soon effected in making it a clean, comfortable house for the sick soldiers, filled the people with admiration and inspired them with great confidence in them. This successful beginning was gratefully acknowledged to Our Lord, Who permits us the happiness to serve Him in the person of the sick."

Of this same event, one month after the Sisters took charge of the hospital, *The Indianapolis Daily Journal*, on June 18, 1861, said editorially: "Providence sometimes turns even our most foolish acts into real blessings, as it often confounds our wisest into follies. Our City Hospital is a striking illustration. When it was commenced there was no need of it. By the time it was completed it was abandoned, and lewd women and vagabond men turned it into a monstrous brothel. It seemed likely to turn out a nuisance so gross as to justify its destruction, and make it necessary to spend a few hundred dollars to tear down what it cost \$30,000.00 to erect. But the war came, and with it the gathering of forces, and its accompanying evils and sickness. There were but very inadequate accommodations in the camp for the sick; none in fact, for the time.

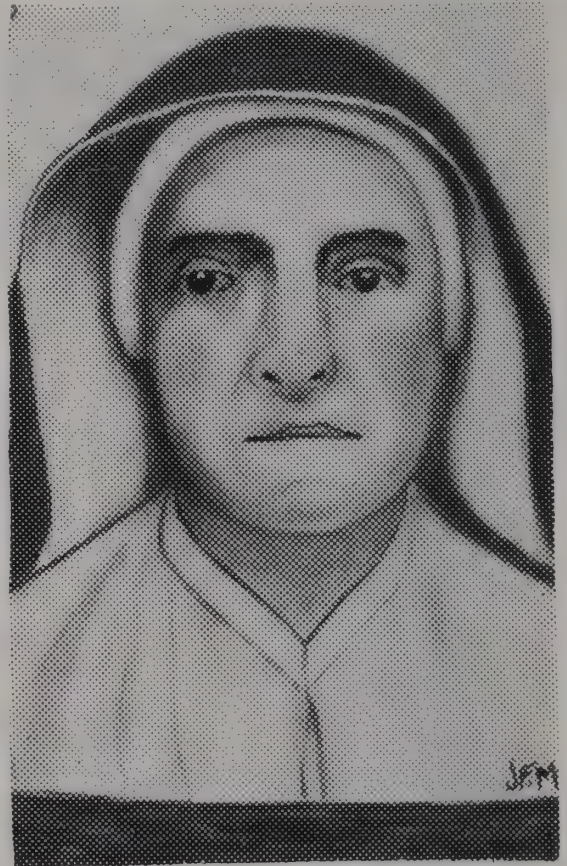
The City Hospital seemed a special providence, sent in the very nick of time. It was exactly what was most needed.

The breaking out of the measles in the State encampment was the first demonstration of its necessity. The surgeons of that encampment, Drs. Jameson and Kitchen, speedily prepared for use, and organized a hospital force under the supervision of the Sisters of Providence of Terre Haute (St. Mary-of-the-Woods) who gave their invaluable services, as those associations always do, without pay, purely in discharge of a high Christian Duty. An appeal to our ladies of the city supplied it with an abundance of excellent bed-clothing, towels, and other necessary articles. The Sisters took charge of the cooking, washing, and general house-keeping of the establishment, and most admirably have they performed their unpleasant but noble duty. Now it is as complete in its arrangement, clean, well ventilated, well-provided and comfortable as any hospital in the country.

"We visited it the other day, and were astonished to find how thoroughly all the needs of the sick had been provided for in the little time that had elapsed since the buildings were occupied. There was no waste, no dirt, no useless hands about the establishment. Everything is substantial, clean, orderly and complete. We doubt if the splendid hospitals of eastern cities can show a more perfect arrangement for the sick than the little, hastily organized hospital here."

In their report, dated Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 14, 1861, Dr. John M. Kitchen and Dr. P. H. Jameson wrote:

Mother Theodore Guerin



Her Sisters Responded

To Miles Murphy, Inspector-General

Dear Sir:

In obedience to your request we cheerfully furnish for your disposal, the following brief report of the number of patients treated at the City (Military) Hospital, Indianapolis, with the results.

We take pleasure in acknowledging valuable aid from Drs. Boobs and Edgerly, who were associated with us in the conduct of the Hospital prior to June 22nd., and also in certifying to the faithfulness of all employees, particularly John A. Reaume, steward, and William Moriarity, one of the Ward-Masters.

In conclusion, we feel we have performed only a plain, straight-forward duty, and that whatever success may have attended the management of the Hospital is due in a great degree to the noble self-sacrificing efforts of those meek and worthy women — the Sisters of Providence.

Signed:

John M. Kitchen.

P. H. Jameson

The Hospital At Vincennes

In July, 1863, besides the Sisters of Providence at the City Hospital in Indianapolis, Ind., there were two other Sisters of Providence in service in a temporary hospital at Vincennes. Of Sisters and their great work, the *History of Knox and Daviess Counties* remarks:

“According to the policy of Governor Morton, Indiana soldiers were brought home for treatment and nursing. After the battle of Fort Donelson the Bishop of Vincennes tendered the use of the Catholic Seminary for the sick and wounded, and the assistance of the Sisters in caring for them.”

To this account *The Community Annals* of the Sisters of Providence adds:

“At the camp formed near Vincennes to receive recruits, some of the men fell sick of the most virulent contagious diseases, which made it necessary to care for them

apart, and that Bishop de St. Palais offered the college building, and asked for two Sisters to take charge of the stricken soldiers. There not being any Sisters at St. Mary-of-the-Woods who could be spared for the purpose, Sister St. Felix Buchanan and Sister Sophy Glenn were called to Vincennes from their respective establishments (the former, the Superior of the house at Madison, the latter, a teacher at Cannelton, Ind.) to be employed according to the request of the Most Reverend Bishop."

Of this great work the *Evansville Journal* comments: "We learn that the Sisters of Providence in Vincennes, with a kindness characteristic of the order, have offered their commodious building as a hospital to the Vincennes Regiment. They also volunteer their services as nurses. Such conduct will be remembered and appreciated by the soldiers."

This Emergency Hospital was opened about the middle of April, and was closed at the end of July. Although of comparatively short duration the work of the Sisters there was truly heroic and memorable. Day and night they were on duty — and day and night they were exposed to the frightful contagion, as well as from the dangers from the patients insane and mad from fever and nerve-racking-pain. Isolated and defenseless, cut off from outside help, these heroines of Christ remained on duty without flinching, nursing, cooking, washing the linens, and cooperating with the doctors in charge.

Governor Morton's Message

Meanwhile in Indianapolis, the Sisters of Providence continued to receive recognition for their splendid work as war nurses in the General Hospital.

Under date of March 23, 1863, the *Indianapolis Journal*, the official paper of the Government, published the report of E. P. Ferris, Chairman of the special committee of the House of Representatives on the conduct of the hospitals in Indianapolis. Mr. Ferris thus concluded this report:

"Indiana will never want for brave sons to go forth and fight her battles and face dangers to preserve her fair

name, so long as they can be assured that if they are unfortunate they will not be neglected and forgotten.

"The Committee feels it their duty in this connection to mention the Sisters of Providence, who, with busy hands and willing hearts, are vigilant and untiring in their ministration to the wants and necessities of the unfortunate soldiers.

"Without compensation for nearly two years the Sisters have had the entire charge of the domestic department at the General Hospital, in which neatness and economy are the prominent characteristics. Quietly but earnestly have they fulfilled this mission of love and kindness; and we most cheerfully assure them that thousands of grateful hearts will cherish these deeds in kind remembrance, and we sincerely hope that heaven may, in answer to the fervent prayer of many a brave soldier, confer upon these Sisters blessings unnumbered which gold can never purchase."

On Saturday morning, June 11, 1864, the *Indianapolis Daily Journal* printed the following: "The arrival of seventy-five sick and wounded Indianians of Sherman's Army, from the hospitals of Louisville and Jeffersonville, at our City General Hospital, called us to that institution yesterday to ascertain their names and condition. One of them said to us that next to home it was the sweetest, quietest spot he had ever found. All of them, with whom we conversed, said there was no comparison between this and the hospitals at Louisville and Jeffersonville. They were there fed on bread and coffee twice a day, and their wounds were dressed only about once in three days. Here they have regular meals of everything suited to their condition, constant and tender care from the nurses, and medical attention from the physician every day. All of them, without accident, will get well.

"The laundry, in charge of the Sisters of Providence, with several female assistants, is a place of work. A thousand pieces of clothing are washed and ironed every week, besides the washing of about five hundred sheets, etc."

Pressing Difficulties of The Sisters

One of the greatest disadvantages and sacrifices suffered by the Sisters was the loss of Mass and the reception of Holy Communion each day. They were fortunate to get to go to Mass on Sundays. St. John's Church, the parish church, was not so far off in actual distance; but it was almost impossible for them to leave the hospital as they



Grave of Sister Eugenia Margaret Gorman, in the Convent Cemetery. A Federal Government Monument with the American Flag.

were so sorely needed there; and besides, at times the streets or roads were almost impassible on account of the mud and debris, and again, transportation in those days was next to impossible. But God was with them, and, in the emergency, supplied what was necessary.

The records of St. John's Academy at this period reveal: "Sister Mary Ambrose, the Superior of St. John's Academy in Indianapolis, from 1859 to 1863, often spoke of the visits she used to make to the General Hospital. After school hours she would borrow a horse and buggy, and drive out to bring in one of the Sisters who could be spared, so that she might assist at Holy Mass the next morning; after which she would drive her back. The Sisters took turns to come in, the arrangements thus affording each Sister the happiness of receiving the Sacraments once a week."

The following item, signed "Respectively, L. D.", bears out the above facts. It appeared in the *Indianapolis Sentinel* as follows:

Editor Sentinel:

I consider it a fact worthy of notice that the Sisters of Providence, who have charge of the Military Hospital, are not furnished with a conveyance to and from the city, but are obliged to wade through mud and mire on foot. A carriage is furnished them on Sundays, it is true, but the religious duties of the Sisters make it necessary that they should come into town every day: and, it is a crying shame that they should be allowed to walk. I can safely say that on the greater part of the way to the hospital the mud is knee-deep. A small one-horse spring wagon would be of infinite use, and where so much money is spent, why not a little be invested to this good purpose? The Sisters are uncomplaining, and for that reason their comfort should the more carefully be looked after. I would be glad if you would call attention to the matter through the columns of the Sentinel.

Respectfully,

L. D.

Sisters In Charge In Hospital

The Sisters who were in the service at the Military Hospital in Indianapolis during the Civil War were: Sis-

ter Athanasius Fogarty, Sister Eugenia Gorman, Sister Mary Frances Guthneck, Sister Mary Rose O'Donaghue, and Sister Mathilda Swimley.

Of these the *Annals of St. Mary's* has the following to say: "Their devotedness, as we have seen from the reports, was greatly appreciated by the doctors and author-



Indianapolis General Hospital. One of the best equipped, and most practical hospitals in the United States.

ities; in fact they won all hearts. The ladies of the city, hearing that the Sisters had poor accommodations for themselves, banded together and bought furniture and other things to make their rooms comfortable."

Of the other Sisters who did outstanding work in connection with the General Hospital, the *Annals of St. Mary's* informs us: "At the end of the war, the General Hospital having been closed, the Sisters opened a home, called "St. John's Infirmary," for the infirm soldiers who had no place to go, or who were not sufficiently recovered to be able to travel. The names of four other Sisters gained wide popularity here, and were associated in the minds of the people with those who had been at the Hospital. These were Sister Henrietta McKenzie, Sister Frances Ann Carney, Sister Louise Mahoney, and Sister Helena Burns."

Perhaps the most outstanding Sister of the whole period was Sister Athanasius. Of her the *Annals of St. Mary's* comments: "The one who was most widely known among the Sister Nurses during the war period was Sister Athanasius, the directress of the Military Hospital, and also of St. John's Infirmary. Her name was a household word in Indianapolis, and her fame yet lingers among the older generation.

"From the day she assumed charge of the hospital to the close of the war, her career was marked by marvellous achievement. She was noted for her cheerfulness, charity and tact. The physicians who attended the hospital said that the success was due to her ability alone, not to their management. How much of her nights was given to hard labor after the day's stress, can never be fully known. Often when she was supposed to be taking her well-earned rest, she would be washing blankets and so forth.

"When exposed to the frightful contagious diseases, as she often was, she improvised a "Fumigation Camp" for herself, whereby she removed any cause of exposure to the hospital before entering again, and no inconvenience resulted.

"When the Military Hospital closed at the end of the war, Sister Athanasius was placed in charge of St. John's Infirmary, where she remained three years. Falling sick, she was succeeded by Sister Henrietta, who was in charge until it closed in 1871.

Monsignor Bessonies's Request Refused

In B. R. Sulgrove's "History of Marion County," after the return of the City Hospital to the city, by the Government, we read: "A short time after the Government returned the Hospital to the city the Rev. Monsignor Augustine Bessonies, V. G., pastor of St. John's Catholic church, asked its donation to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd as a prison for females. At the same time he asked the completion of the city house of refuge, on the Bluff Road, south of the city, of which a very substantial and costly foundation had been laid for a year or two, and left unfinished for want of means, on grounds donated by the late S. A. Fletcher; but opposition of the other denominations defeated these applications, and the hospital was left vacant for a few months, when furniture and supplies were obtained at the sale of Government stores in Jeffersonville, Indiana. A superintendent and consulting physician were appointed, and the hospital opened July 1, 1866. The old Government additions becoming delapidated, the city decided to build two substantial and commodious additions of brick three stories high, and one recently completed, and opened for the admission of patients.

It may be noted, in this connection, that the house of refuge desired by the Catholic Association, was soon afterwards finished, and put in charge of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd."

Final Recognition of Their Work

The Annals of St. Mary's supplies us with the following glorious conclusion of the work and heroism of the Sisters of Providence for their work at the General Hospital, Indianapolis, Ind. To quote: "When the question arose in later years of a memorial to the "Nuns of the Battlefields," the Sisters of Providence did not expect their War Nurses to be included, as they had not actually been on any battlefield. Their friends, however, thought otherwise, and argued that the hospitals were battlefields, where the dangers were as great, and the services as severe as in the open. Through Mrs. Margaret Taylor, State President of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, in Indianapolis, the Sisters of Providence were recommended to Mrs. Ellen Ryan Jolly, Chairman of the

Nuns' Memorial Committee, who immediately interested herself in their behalf. She also obtained Government



Monument to "The Nuns of the Battlefields," Washington, D.C.
headstones to mark the graves of the Nurses at St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

"The installation of these tombstones in the little Convent Cemetery was an event of solemn grandeur, thrilling in its patriotic and religious blending. Over a thousand Sisters were then at the Mother House for the annual school and retreat. An altar had been improvised in the cemetery in front of the Calvary Group, that stands at the far end. Large American flags were stretched on either side. Countless smaller flags decorated the Calvary Mound, and a flag stood at the head of the grave of each War Nurse, here and there among the other graves.

"The choir of nearly a hundred voices, black-veiled religious and white-veiled novices, stood to the right. The Community gathered on the walks and among the graves; visitors mingled in the rear, and clergymen assisted at the altar. The sun was just rising. By the time it had climbed over the tree-tops the solemn and beautiful Requiem Mass was ended. The scene was touching unto tears. The Cele-

brant was the Convent Chaplain, the Rt. Rev. Monsignor A. J. Rawlinson, Ph.D., War Chaplain of the 325th Field Artillery of the American Expeditionary Forces in France, during World War I.

"More than sixty years had passed before the service, rendered by the War Nurses of the various Sisterhoods, was recognized by the erection of a memorial. A splendid monument of granite and bronze in Washington, D.C., now stands as a witness to the general appreciation of their heroic labors.

"The figure to the extreme right of the group represents a Sister of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods. Small in proportion may have been the service given by this Order, but the reverence of the Sisters for the cause, and the sacred tradition, is not small, and their desire to perpetuate the memory thereof has inspired the writing of this story for a 'memorial in a book' lest we forget."

Thus the short story of the five, long, eventful and memorable years of the Sisters of Providence in the up-building and standardization of the General Hospital in Indianapolis; thus, their patriotism and heroism in one of the most critical periods in the history of the State and Nation. They may not, in the strict sense of the words, be classed as "Nuns of the Battlefields," but they were, truly, heroines of the aftermath of the battles' blood, wreckage, and tears; soothing with the Hand of Providence poor, shattered humanity, with its paralyzed bodies and tottering brains.

The complete story of the heroism and patriotism of these noble maids of Christ has not, to date, been told. In the confusion and terrorism of war-times many of the records were not kept by Government officials; in fact the Community Records of St. Mary-of-the-Woods are comparatively few and brief. In the after-years of confusion, uncertainty, and reconstruction of governmental affairs, it was neglected and finally was forgotten.

As far as the good Sisters were concerned they were perfectly well satisfied to have their deeds recorded by the Recording Angel, and hidden in the Divine Heart of the Master — in the Annals of Eternity, where Justice is done, and the truly great and worthy shine as stars in the firmament of heaven, forever and forever.



